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Sub-regional Decade Review Meeting on the Implementation of the Beijing Platform
for Action (Beijing +10)

Kigali, Rwanda
2-4 June 2004

**Report of the Sub-regional Decade
Review Meeting on the Implementation
of the Beijing Platform for Action in
Eastern Africa
(Draft)**

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Introduction:

1. The Sub-regional Intergovernmental Meeting of Experts for the Decade Review of the Beijing Platform for Action in Eastern Africa was organized at the Hotel Umubano Novotel in Kigali, Rwanda from 2 to 4 June 2004.
2. The meeting was attended by government Experts from national gender machineries, Ministries of Finance, Economic Planning, Industry and Trade, Foreign Affairs, Health and Agriculture from the following countries: Burundi, Comoros, Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Djibouti, Eritrea, Kenya, Madagascar, Rwanda, Uganda and United Republic of Tanzania.
3. Representatives from the following organizations were also in attendance:
 - Sub-regional Non-governmental Organizations: Eastern Africa Sub-regional Support Initiative for the advancement of women (EASSI).
 - United Nations Sub-regional Offices: United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) Eastern and the Horn of Africa, United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) Central Africa.
 - United Nations national offices: United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Kigali.
 - UN-HABITAT.

Agenda Item 1: Official Opening

4. The **UNIFEM Regional Director of Eastern and Horn of Africa Sub-region**, Ms. Nyaradzai Gumbonzvanda, said that she felt honoured to be part of this important meeting. She reminded the delegates of the objectives of the meeting regarding issues of gender equality, and the complex challenges facing the East African region, notably conflict and the HIV and AIDS pandemic. The Director congratulated Governments of the Sub-region regarding achievements which have been recorded since Beijing and Dakar. She underscored the importance of the Additional Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples Rights on women's rights, which was adopted in Maputo in 2003. She stressed the need to ratify and domesticate the Protocol. She specifically congratulated Governments of Rwanda, Uganda, Eritrea and Tanzania for adopting affirmative action. She called for efforts to sustain these achievements, which should be matched with resource allocation.

5. She mentioned the UN Security Council “Resolution 1325” (2000) which calls for the protection of women and girls in conflict situations. She further urged governments to implement this Resolution in preparation for the upcoming International Conference of the Great Lakes. She also referred to the need to engender the NEPAD process. She further noted that conflict adversely affect women’s empowerment as resources are channeled to security matters. In the area of HIV and AIDS, the presenter noted the need to give special attention to the inter-relationship between conflict and HIV and AIDS, which is further enhanced by certain practices. Further to that she noted the burden of home-based care and implications for women.
6. In his welcoming remarks Mr. Mbaye Diouf, **the representative of the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) and Director of ECA’s Eastern Africa Office** cordially welcomed all the participants to the Sub-regional Meeting for the Decade Review of the Beijing Platform for Action in Eastern Africa. In particular, Mr. Diouf thanked the Government of the Republic of Rwanda for hosting this important meeting and the warm welcome extended to the participants. He reiterated that the present meeting gives the region the opportunity to take stock of achievements and identify future challenges. He insisted on the fact that at this crucial point, the East African region has put emphasis on six areas, namely: poverty, education, women training, economic empowerment of women to promote their participation in economic activities, women’ s human and legal rights, access to decision making positions and the prevention of any form of discrimination. It goes without saying that the region has not put aside the other areas mentioned in the Dakar and Beijing platforms. Mr. Diouf also underscored the importance of the civil society’s participation in the process and in this respect, congratulated sub-regional NGOs for the success of the forum they held on May 31 – June 1, 2004, whose report shall be submitted to the intergovernmental meeting. He noted the need to harmonize the African Platform for Action, MDGs, NEPAD and Beijing +10 processes. In his concluding remarks, he mentioned the need to allocate more resources to gender and effective Gender Budgeting.
7. Her Excellency, **Honourable Minister of Gender and Family Promotion of the Republic of Rwanda**, Mrs Valérie Nyirahabineza stressed the importance of the meeting, which gives sub-regional experts the opportunity to closely and exhaustively examine actions undertaken a decade after the adoption of the Beijing Declaration. She also acknowledged that despite progress made in the sub-region and in Africa generally, considerable difficulties and challenges regarding among others, poverty, illiteracy and high maternal mortality rates still lie ahead.
8. The Honourable Minister cited a few instances of progress recorded in Rwanda particularly in the area of decision-making. Today Rwanda has 49% of women elected to Parliament and 32% of women within the cabinet of ministers. She invited participants to deeply reflect on the ways and means to consolidate achievements and speed up the implementation of Dakar and Beijing Platforms of Action and declared the meeting opened.

Agenda Item 2: Election of the Bureau of the Meeting

9. The following countries were unanimously elected as members of the Bureau for the meeting:

Chair:	Rwanda
1 st Vice Chair:	Kenya
2 nd Vice Chair:	Madagascar
Rapporteur:	Uganda

Agenda Item 3: Adoption of the Agenda and Work Programme

10. The Chairperson presented the draft Agenda which was adopted with some additions.

Agenda Item 4: Overview of *achievements and challenges* in promoting Gender equality and women's empowerment in Africa since Beijing

11. The ECA Secretariat representative presented a background document entitled “ *An overview of achievements and challenges in implementing the Beijing Platform for Action*. She noted that this paper is not in its final state and additions from subregional meetings are going to be taken into consideration when this document is being finalised. She briefly made a synopsis of the status of implementation of BPFA focusing on the 12 critical areas of concern. Under each area, she noted the progress made as well as the challenges that still remain to be addressed.
12. In examining the status of women in Africa compared to the global arena, the presenter noted that African women are not adequately empowered and that some challenges and constraints still remain in some areas. Additionally, she noted the need for poverty alleviation in addressing challenges faced by women. Existing salary imbalances between men and women is a challenge both globally and regionally. Although Africa has recorded progress in the area of education, health, women's human rights, violence against women and representation of women in decision-making bodies, there is still a need to ensure that women have access to education, by ensuring access to universal free education. Regarding women's human rights, most governments recognize women's reproductive rights as gender issues. Violence against women is accepted as a Human Rights issue.
13. Labour legislation has been enacted by most governments to harmonise international laws with local interventions. Most countries have adopted gender sensitive policies. Most countries have ratified CEDAW.

14. Participants reacted to the presentation, noting the positives that have been presented and noting that it is no longer an issue of whether gender should be addressed, but how it should be done. Progress indicators were noted and structural constraints, linked to the continent were noted. Weakness of the women's movement was noted and it was thus noted that constraints were not in isolation. It was noted that the paper should incorporate the impact of rapidly rising urbanisation on women's lives, as well as data monitoring indicators. The report should tackle FGM as a cross-cutting issue under health, and that the less women are educated, the more they are likely to continue with these harmful practices. A question of how gender is integrated into the macroeconomy in general should be incorporated into the report. Participants also noted the lack of data in general and the need to have gender disaggregated data and to allow for sharing of best practices in the sub-region. Also noted was the lack of diversity within gender, as well as the lack of monitoring and evaluation frameworks and indicators in the report.

Agenda Item 5: Presentations and Discussions of national reports

15. Various country representatives made brief presentation of their national reports. These reports based on each country's selected areas of concern and the summarized presentations covered (i) achievements to date (ii) lessons and best practices and (iii) challenges and strategies for the way forward.
16. The main **achievements** included among others legal reforms, institutional capacity and policy mechanisms for gender equality. However, countries are at varying stages of implementation. There is increased enrolment in primary education for the girl child. In the area of women's representation in power and in decision making, some countries have made significant strides. Constitutions have made provision for equality of all persons in most countries.
17. There are varying lessons and best practices to be noted from the sub-region. Rwanda has recorded 48% and 32% of women parliamentarians and women ministers respectively. Some countries have translated legal instruments into local languages and disseminated them widely. Regarding land and property inheritance, some countries have achieved equality among men and women.
18. Although considerable success was cited, countries faced several challenges in implementing the platform. Lack of resources to facilitate women's empowerment is seen as a serious impediment. Women remain poor and economically disadvantaged in all countries. Lack of gender disaggregated data makes planning and monitoring difficult. Quality of Education and retention remain low for the girl child despite increasing enrolment. Health indicators have worsened. HIV/AIDS pandemic is affecting women more acutely than men. Violence against women is still a big problem especially at the domestic level.

Despite legislation, infant and maternal mortality rates are still high, Female Genital Mutilation is still widespread, with some countries recording high incidence. Cultural negative practices and early marriage is still a problem. Women participation in conflict resolution and management remain marginal

19. The discussion which followed the presentations emphasized the need to: strengthen and maintain affirmative action in all areas of concern; develop and utilize indicators and benchmarks; demonstrate and reaffirm political goodwill and commitment; enhance the decentralization of governance and resource allocation. It was noted that women and environment concern has not received much attention. In spite of the success registered, weak implementation of international instruments such as CEDAW, non-ratification and deposition of the additional Protocol to the African Charter on Human and People's Rights related to Women's Rights in Africa still remains a challenge.

Agenda Item 6: Presentation of the guidelines: progress made in implementation of the critical areas of concern of the Beijing Platform for Action and further initiatives and actions identified in the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, in Eastern Africa.

20. A member of the ECA Secretariat introduced the meeting of Experts to the guidelines that will facilitate the assessment of progress made in the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action and other initiatives and their impact on promoting gender equality and empowerment of women in the sub-region since 1995.

Agenda Item 7: Working Groups

21. Participants met in working groups to review the document titled "guidelines for group discussions on the implementation of the critical areas of concern of the Beijing Platform for Action and further initiatives and policy frameworks" with a view to assess progress made, consider main challenges and constraints that have hampered the promotion of gender equality, and identify the most urgent issues in the sub-region and proposed actions to address them.

Agenda Item 8: Reports from Sub-regional Offices of UN Agencies and IGOs + Discussions

22. The representative of the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-HABITAT), Ms. Angela Hakizimana, read the statement of Ms Anna Kajumalo Tibaijuka. She outlined the UN-HABITAT framework which is in the HABITAT Agenda. She gave an account of the settlement patterns in Africa and stressed the need for governments to come up with mechanisms to address the challenge of rural-urban migration, which ultimately result in informal settlements and slums.

23. She further recommended that efforts to address gender equality should take into account the concerns of rural and urban poor women, especially those living and working in slums and informal settlements. Governments should promote the policy of inclusive cities which will result in citizens contributing both economically and productively to the development of their cities. New developments should also take into account the gender equality in human settlements development. Women's affairs Ministries and women's organisations should proactively engage with those ministries responsible for local governments, housing, transport, urban and human settlements development, as well as municipalities and local authorities in the struggle to achieve the advancement of women and gender equality. (The statement of Ms A. K. Tibajuka is attached).
24. In the ensuing discussions, UN-HABITAT clarified that to assist drive the Beijing process, they have worked with gender Ministries in some countries, and, have undertaken research on women's rights and property. UN-HABITAT has been involved in a consultative process, with a view to promoting women's access to land, housing and property. Currently, there are efforts to promote women's empowerment projects through provision of revolving funds and training in human and women's rights.
25. Ms. Nyaradzai Gumbonzvanda from the **Sub-regional Office of the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) for East and Horn of Africa**, explained that UNIFEM is guided by CEDAW, APFA/BPFA and UN Security Council Resolution 1325. It provides technical and financial assistance to **support** innovative activities; it **serves** as a catalyst to ensure women's participation and **promotes** gender mainstreaming in the overall United Nations system. In the sub-region, UNIFEM has contributed towards achievement of some of the APFA/BPFA priority areas. Equally, UNIFEM has gone into partnership with governments, intergovernmental bodies and NGOs in several areas. In addressing these priorities, UNIFEM encountered challenges which tend to undermine some of the gains made in implementation of the Beijing commitments.
26. Challenges have been faced in carrying out the above priorities. Notable amongst these is the increasing feminization of poverty, violence against women, the HIV & AIDS pandemic as well as the decreasing resources for gender equality action and women's empowerment. These constraints undermined some of the gains made in implementation of the Beijing commitments. UNIFEM therefore recommends for advocacy for greater budgetary allocation, increased efforts to address the linkages between poverty, conflict, VAW and HIV & AIDS; strengthening of women's institutions and building capacities of women's political and economic empowerment; greater mainstreaming of gender in national and regional initiatives and sustained linkages with CEDAW/BPFA and MDGs.

Agenda Item 9: Report from Sub-regional Non-governmental Organizations and Discussions

27. Under the leadership of the Eastern Africa Sub-regional Support Initiative for the Advancement of Women (EASSI), representatives of several women non-governmental organisations from eight East African countries met in Kigali, Rwanda on 31 May to 1 June 2004. The purpose of the meeting was to take stock of what NGOs have done and consolidate the review process towards achieving the commitments in the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. The aim was to generate independent data on the progress made in the implementation.
28. The Forum identified areas in which greatest progress has been made and those in which least progress has been registered in implementing the Dakar and Beijing Platforms for Action in Eastern Africa. Globalisation, neo-liberal economic policies, poverty, environment, HIV and AIDS, institutional mechanisms for women's empowerment, good governance and social service provisioning were identified as emerging challenges. Gains have been recorded in the areas of education, legal reforms as well as women and decision making processes. Challenges emerging as new threats to the advancement of women were also analysed. The Forum further noted areas that need to be addressed in future. (A detailed copy of the report is attached).

Agenda item 10: The Challenge of HIV and AIDS on the strive for gender equality and empowerment of women

29. The Secretariat Representative introduced this agenda item by presenting a synopsis of a background document entitled "*The Challenge of HIV and AIDS on the strive for gender equality and the empowerment of women.*" The study analyzes the inter-linkages between gender, HIV/AIDS and poverty in Africa and the challenges that impede efforts to attain gender equality and the empowerment of women. During the presentation, he observed that Sub-Saharan Africa harbored 70% of the HIV-infected population of the world. HIV and AIDS infection rates among women were rising faster than among men. In the Eastern Africa sub region, more than 50% of the deaths related to HIV and AIDS were women and girls. Girls were also infected at a much earlier age than boys because of socio-economic, political and biological reasons.
30. The presentation noted that poverty increased the likelihood of engaging in risk prone activities in both men and women in relation to HIV and AIDS. Some cultural norms and practices continued to perpetuate transmission of infection. Various measures had been taken to address HIV and AIDS in Africa. These included: Resolutions and declarations such as The Durban Declaration; legislations, where some African countries had amended their laws to guide their responses to the epidemic; policies, programmes and systems which focus on HIV and AIDS; establishment of specialized organizations working on prevention, mitigation,

treatment and care at national and grassroots level; establishment of funding for HIV and AIDS such as the Global Fund to Fight AIDS.

31. In the discussion that followed, there was consensus to make all possible efforts to address HIV and AIDS, which had critically affected the Eastern Africa sub region. Several issues were raised that have a direct bearing in the fight against HIV and AIDS namely: the way in which the data and statistics are collected, the prevention methods offered to women as well as the advocacy and awareness issues. The participants recommend that governments provide all possible resources to address unplanned rapid urbanization to face HIV and AIDS pandemic in slums and informal settlements.

Agenda Item 11: Working Groups Reports

A. Overview of achievements in promoting gender equality and women's empowerment

32. An extensive review of achievements, challenges, constraints and the way-forward was carried out by the meeting on the basis of guidelines on progress made in the implementation of the critical areas of concern of the Beijing Platform for Action (Refer to Annex)

Agenda Item 12: Presentation and Adoption of the Report of the Experts Meeting

33. The draft report was presented by the Rapporteur and adopted by the Experts with amendments.

Agenda Item 13: Closing of the Meeting